# Exploring Learning Outcomes Through the Lens of Academic Self-Efficacy Theory: A Study of International Students in China

Jiying Wu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Finance and Economics, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, China Kase Shabani<sup>1</sup> (Corresponding Author)

<sup>1</sup>School of Finance and Economics, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, China **Muhammad Bilal**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Finance and Economics, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, China

**Keywords:** Academic Self-Efficacy, Learning Motivation, Study Experience, Cultural Adaptation, Learning Quality

Authors Contribution: Wu Jiying: Software, supervision, review, and editing; Kase Mokeso Rosette Shabani, Conceptualization, Methodology, writing- original draft; Muhammad Bilal,

proofreading, compositional arrangement.

Funding: Not Applicable

Data Availability: Data will be made available on request.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics approval: Not applicable.

Consent to participate: Not applicable

#### ABSTRACT

The rising enrollment of international students in Chinese universities calls for a comprehensive understanding of how different elements interact to shape their educational outcomes. This study investigates the key factors influencing learning quality (LQ) amongst international students in China, explicitly examining academic self-efficacy (ASE), learning motivation (LM), study experience (SE), and cultural adaptation (CA). Using a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach, data was collected from 200 international students to assess the relationships between the selected variables. The results show that LM and ASE are the most significant predictors of

LQ. While CA had a less direct effect on LQ, it played an essential role in enhancing SE and indirectly influencing LQ. These findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to create environments that build student confidence and motivation and improve student academic outcomes.

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# **1** Introduction

In recent years, China's higher education institutions (HEIs) have emerged as a significant destination for international students, reflecting a major shift in global education system (Zheng, 2024). Historically, countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Hong Kong, which were traditional suppliers of international students, focused on sending students abroad (Glass & Cruz, 2023). However, these regions, along with mainland China, have increasingly implemented higher education internationalization policies aimed at attracting international students to their own institutions (Liu & Coates, 2024). This change is part of a broader trend as China has transitioned from being a primary source of international students for Western countries to a key player in the global education market (Shen & Wang, 2024).

The growth of China's international education market is evident in the rising number of international students enrolled in its HEIs (Qiping & White, 2023). From just 1,236 students in 1978, the number increased dramatically to 492,185 by 2019, representing students from over 200 countries (Li, 2022). This expansion aligns with China's strategic objectives to enhance global influence, foster economic development, and deepen international engagement through education (Bukhari et al., 2024). Moreover, the Chinese government has set ambitious targets for international student recruitment, as outlined in the 10th national five-year plan, which aimed to enroll approximately 500,000 international students by 2020, a goal that was reached ahead of schedule (Luong et al., 2024).

While the increasing enrollment of international students in China is a positive development, it brings several challenges (S. Liu et al., 2023). One of the most significant is the cultural adaptation (CA) of international students to the Chinese academic environment (Cao et al., 2023). CA has been identified as a crucial factor influencing international students' experiences and their

ability to integrate into their host culture (Bai et al., 2023). The challenges of adapting to a new cultural and educational environment can be substantial, particularly given the differences in teaching methods, academic expectations, and social interactions between China and the students' home countries (Dwumah Manu et al., 2023).

On the other hand, academic self-efficacy (ASE), or a student's belief in their own ability to achieve academically, is another important element influencing learning outcomes among overseas students (Maharani & Purnama, 2023). Students with high ASE are better prepared to face academic problems, resulting in higher learning quality (LQ) (Chen et al., 2023). However, overseas students frequently suffer with low ASE due to cultural and linguistic differences, resulting in self-doubt and diminished resilience (Bai et al., 2023). Peer mentoring, skill-building workshops, and institutional assistance have all been found to promote ASE, allowing students to develop the tenacity and self-control required for academic achievement (Barton, 2023).

Learning motivation (LM) is equally important in determining academic achievement and retention among overseas students (Amzat et al., 2023). Motivation might be intrinsic, driven by personal development, or extrinsic, fueled by scholarships and academic acclaim (Agafonow & Perez, 2024). Prior researches on international students have indicated that factors such as unfavorable living conditions in their native countries and the availability of scholarships encourage many students to study abroad (Apsite-Berina et al., 2023; Nikou et al., 2023; Shkoler & Rabenu, 2023). Furthermore, studies show that motivated students use self-regulation skills to better traverse academic problems (Nacaroğlu & Bektaş, 2023).

Traditional educational interactions like lectures and classroom activities and non-traditional interactions like experiential learning and extracurricular engagement, has a significant impact on international students' study experiences (SE), (Lewis, 2024). A positive SE is strongly associated with improved learning outcomes and student satisfaction because it provides a comprehensive environment for academic and personal development (Wong & Chapman, 2023). In culturally varied environments like China, SE can either promote or inhibit achievement, depending on the extent of institutional support provided (Bai & Wang, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on international education, limited studies explored the holistic and dynamic interactions between learning motivations, cultural adoption, and their direct and indirect links and effects on learning quality, particularly in the context of Chinese universities (AL-Qadri et al., 2024; Li et al., 2023). Though previous literature has measured and

investigated separately, the mediating roles of academic self-efficacy and study experience remain underexplored, leaving a significant gap in understanding the mechanisms that enhance learning outcomes (Mao & Ji, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Furthermore, the self-efficacy theory and cultural adoption theory have not been adequately addressed in showing how their relationships impact students' adaptation to the educational environment in China. In addition, practical strategies to support international students in overcoming adaptation challenges and (Wang et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023) enriching their academic self-efficacy in Chinese universities remain insufficient despite the increasing number of enrollments. This research aims to bridge these gaps by offering a comprehensive framework and practical recommendations for improving learning qualities in Chinese universities. Lastly, the findings of this study employ an integrated structural equation modeling (SEM) approach to investigate the relationships among multiple dimensions of the international student experience and their influence on LQ at Chinese universities.

This study is significant as it improves the literature on LQ among international students in China. This was possible by providing a complete model that incorporates numerous factors influencing LQ among international students in China. The findings contribute valuable guidance for educational institutions aiming to enhance support systems, ultimately fostering more effective academic environments for international students.

This research is organized into six main sections. Section 2 provides the theoretical background and development of hypotheses, and Section 3 details the methodology process. Section 4 discusses the research findings and implications, and Section 5 presents the conclusions drawn from the research. Finally, Section 6 addresses the study's limitations and offers suggestions for future research directions.

# 2 Theory underpinning and hypothesis development

## 2.1 Academic self-efficacy (ASE)

Self-efficacy theory introduced by (Bandura, 1997) emphasizes the influence of personal belief in one's abilities on performance outcomes, particularly in challenging contexts. ASE, or students' confidence in managing academic tasks, is directly linked to enhanced LQ by promoting resilience and persistence in the face of academic challenges (Schunk et al., 2022). High ASE enables students to view obstacles as achievable goals, thus fostering a proactive approach to learning and improving educational outcomes (Shengyao et al., 2024). ASE is essential for

international students under additional strain to adjust to new educational and cultural situations, as it might influence their overall academic engagement and achievement (Guo & Laokulrach, 2023). According to the theory, higher self-efficacy enriches students' motivation to engage in challenging tasks and obstacles and their ability to manage stress. Along with that, cultural adoption also influences student self-efficacy to shape their experience in foreign academic dynamics. This dynamic interplay between personal beliefs, environmental influences, and behaviors aligns with the core tenets of Self-Efficacy Theory (Bai et al., 2023).

Concerning the theoretical paradigm, self-efficacy also provides actionable applications for improving and enriching the learning outcomes of international students in Chinese universities. Institutions can focus on and implement strategies to promote mastery experiences through structured academic support programs (Mohzana, 2024). This approach not only encourages and helps students to build their academic abilities but also supports their cultural adoption and improves overall learning quality. Lastly, the research proposed model also provides a practical foundation for international student's academic success in a dynamic educational environment.

# 2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual model, shown in Figure 1, examines the direct and indirect relationships between SE, CA, LM, ASE, and LQ. These constructs are drawn from well-established theoretical frameworks and empirical findings in the literature, emphasizing the significance of both personal and environmental factors in shaping academic outcomes. Specifically, the hypotheses investigate how the variables will likely interact and influence LQ. The following sections outline the hypotheses that underpin this conceptual framework.

#### 2.2.1 Relationship between LM and LQ

An experiment was conducted to investigate the impact of three distinct motivation strategies—surface, deep, and achiever approaches—on LQ (Wang & Jou, 2023). The findings revealed significant differences in learning experiences among participants, with those adopting the achiever approach, characterized by the highest level of LM, showing a substantial improvement in LQ. Additionally, all three motivational approaches significantly enhanced overall learning outcomes, demonstrating the pivotal role of LM in driving educational achievements (Daniel et al., 2024). So, we hypothesized the following;

H1. LM has a positive effect on LQ

# 2.2.2 Relationship between CA and LQ

CA has emerged as a key factor in enhancing LQ (Cao & Meng, 2022). Implementing responsive teaching, peer support, and resources such as language assistance and cultural orientation is critical for developing culturally sensitive and inclusive educational environments that foster students' sense of belonging and confidence (Lau & Shea, 2024). When institutions prioritize CA, it results in improved cross-cultural communication, increased student engagement, and cognitive benefits (Asri et al., 2024). These findings demonstrate that CA improves LQ by encouraging respect for different cultural perspectives, enriching the educational experience. Therefore, this study presents the below hypothesis;

H2. CA has a positive effect on LQ.

#### 2.2.3 Relationship between LM and ASE

Motivation is a complex process that initiates, directs, and sustains goal-oriented behavior, and it plays a crucial role in academic settings (Bandhu et al., 2024; TÜRKER & BAHÇECİ, 2024). Research addressing the motivation of international students has provided insights into the push-pull factors and motivations of these students, particularly those from Africa and other Asian countries (D. Liu et al., 2023). The study suggests that unfavorable conditions in their home countries and the availability of scholarships significantly motivate these individuals to pursue international education (Guan et al., 2023). This LM, in turn, enhances their ASE, as it reinforces their belief in their ability to achieve academic success in a foreign environment (Yue et al., 2024). Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis;

#### H3. LM has a positive effect on ASE.

#### 2.2.4 Relationship between CA and SE

Unlike Western multiculturalism, China's attitude to ethnicity and culture frequently provides overseas students a distinct setting that can lead to culture shock (Hang, 2023). Studies also explored the CA processes of international students in China and found that those who successfully adapted to Chinese culture experienced a marked increase in their confidence levels (Lu et al., 2024). It suggests that successful CA helps students navigate daily life in China and enhances their overall self-confidence, which is critical for their academic and social success during their stay (Bibi et al., 2023). Moreover, we summarized as follows;

H4. CA has a positive and significant effect on SE

2.2.5 Relationship between ASE and LQ

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence to plan and execute the plans required to manage potential challenges (Waddington, 2023). In the academic context, ASE pertains to a student's confidence in their abilities, which is critical for their academic performance (Schunk, 2023). ASE has been positively and significantly associated with socio-cultural adaptation (Prasetyono et al., 2024). This indicates that students with higher levels of ASE are more likely to adapt to new cultural environments, enhancing their LQ by fostering greater engagement and persistence in academic tasks (Lin et al., 2023).

H5. ASE has a positive effect on LQ

## 2.2.6 Relationship between SE and LQ

International SEs emphasize stay duration, pre-arrival support, and cultural understanding established during the study (Singh, 2023). Experiential learning and extracurricular activities are examples of non-traditional interactions that are part of the SE (Akkilinc, 2024; Ellinger et al., 2023; Sá, 2023). These elements collectively determine international students' academic success, personal development, and satisfaction (Marginson, 2023). A thorough and positive SE is thus intended to improve LQ by providing students with the skills and competencies required for success. Hence, the literature proved that;

H6. SE has a positive and significant effect on LQ.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

# 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Research context

A questionnaire was created and pilot-tested on ten international students, who provided input on any problematic items; this procedure allowed for modest changes to improve clarity and validity (Cowan et al., 2024). Following the pilot test, the finalized questionnaire was given to 600 enrolled overseas students, who each received a "survey pack" containing the questionnaire, a cover letter detailing the study's objectives and benefits, and detailed instructions for completion. 200 viable replies were obtained, producing a response rate of 33.3%, deemed acceptable for survey-based research in academic contexts, where response rates typically average about 20% (Newton, 2024).

## 3.2 Sample

The data collection methodology utilized a systematic random sampling technique. Participants were invited to complete the questionnaire via emails sent directly to their university accounts. University administrators provided access to student directories, ensuring the email distribution list represented various academic levels and nationalities. Each email contained a personalized link to the online survey platform, allowing respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience.

Table 1 represents the responses from 200 international students. The age distribution was 47.5% aged 18–25, 43% aged 26–33, and 9.5% aged 34–41, with the 34–41 age group slightly underrepresented. Concerning gender, 54.5% of the respondents identified as male, while 45.5% identified as female. The participants represented a variety of academic levels, with 49.5% being undergraduate students, 32.5% graduate students, 13% pursuing PhDs, and 5% language students. Additionally, respondents hailed from diverse regions, with 57% coming from African countries and 16.5% from Asian countries (excluding China). This geographic representation reflects the diversity of the international student population.

The questionnaire's responses were automatically recorded in a secure database. Measures were taken to ensure that each student could only submit one response, and participation was both voluntary and anonymous. The entire data collection process adhered to ethical standards, ensuring the confidentiality of respondents. This approach provided reliable, comprehensive data, ensuring an accurate reflection of the international student experience.

Table 1: Details of sample responses								
Classification		Frequency	Percentage (%)					
Gender	female	91	45.5					
	male	109	54.5					
	Total	200	100					
Age group	18-25	95	47.5					
	26-33	86	43					
	34-41	19	9.5					
	Total	200	100					
Study level	language	10	5					
	undergraduate	99	49.5					
	masters	65	32.5					
	PhD	26	13					
	Total	200	100					
Continent	Africa	114	57					
	Asia (excluding China)	33	16.5					
	Europe	10	5					
	Middle east	11	5.5					
	North America	14	7					
	South America	4	2					
	Oceania	14	7					
	Total	200	100					

#### 3.3 Measures

Participants were administered a questionnaire encompassing various dimensions, including SE, LM, CA, ASE, and LQ. An experienced researcher oversaw the construction of the survey to ensure its validity and reliability. To maintain clarity and organization, the questionnaire was divided into sections corresponding to each latent variable. Specific questions were carefully formulated for each variable, and a Likert scale was employed, enabling respondents to convey their level of agreement with each statement using options such as "strongly agree," "agree," "neutral," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." For data analysis in SPSS version 26, the Likert scale was converted to a numerical scale where (1) represented "strongly agree," (2) denoted

"agree," (3) indicated "neutral," (4) corresponded to "disagree," and (5) signified "strongly disagree." The distribution of responses across each category is presented in Table 2.

(1) SE

The SE was assessed using three items that focused on diverse academic exchanges both within and outside of the classroom. Respondents were requested to evaluate the difficulty of schoolwork (Y1), the extent of communication with professors outside of class (Y2), and the quantity of interaction between classmates outside of the classroom (Y3). The use of a Likert scale allows for more nuanced responses to these aspects, following earlier methodologies used in higher education research (South et al., 2022).

(2) LM

Levels of LM was measured using three questions that reflected inner and extrinsic motivating elements impacting students' academic achievement. The measures evaluated students' attitudes towards academic accomplishment (X1), the role of scholarships as a motivation (X2), and their ability to understand the language medium used in classes (X3). This measurement adheres to the frameworks described by (Kotera et al., 2023) and (Tang & He, 2023) emphasizing goal-oriented behavior as a predictor of academic achievement.

(3) CA

The extent of CA among international students was evaluated through three items that gauged familiarity with Chinese culture (Z1), comfort in social interactions in China (Z2), and frequency of using the Chinese language for communication (Z3). These items align with the constructs of CA as described by (Qian & Yu, 2023) and (Yang et al., 2023) emphasizing both social and linguistic integration.

(4) ASE

ASE was examined using three items: students' confidence in their academic abilities (E1), perceived competence in completing coursework (E2), and adequate time and priority management (E3). This operationalization is based on (Ifdil et al., 2024) idea of ASE, which emphasizes an individual's belief in their capacity to attain specified academic objectives.

(5) LQ

LQ was measured using three measures that focused on students' evaluations of their academic achievements and resources. The measures measured how well students thought they learnt their schoolwork (F1), their self-assessment of academic performance (F2), and their satisfaction with

the quality of academic materials (F3). These items reflect essential markers of LQ, as recommended by recent research (Wong & Chapman, 2023).

Table 2: Percentage responding to items on the Likert scale questionnaire.									
Items	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %				
Study experience									
Coursework during my study is incredibly	15.6	37.7	34.7	10.1	2.0				
challenging (Y1)									
There is regular communication with my	13.0	36.0	32.0	17.5	1.5				
professors outside classroom. (Y2)									
There is regular communication among my	4.5	32.0	31.5	18.0	13.5				
classmates outside the classroom (Y3)									
Learning Motivation									
Academic achievement is important to me(X1)	41.5	32.0	17.5	5.0	4.0				
The availability of scholarships motivates me to	41.5	30.0	19.5	7.0	2.0				
perform well in my studies. (X2)									
I understand the language medium in the	24.1	46.2	19.6	9.5	0.5				
classroom. (X3)									
Cultural Adaptation									
I am familiar with Chinese culture (Z1)	11.1	42.2	36.7	9.0	1.0				
I am comfortable in social situations in China (Z2)	14.5	41.0	31.5	11.0	2.0				
I use Chinese language to communicate every day	11.0	33.0	22.5	24.5	9.0				
Academic Self-efficacy									
I am confident in my academic abilities (E1)	24.0	48.5	20.0	6.5	1.0				

I always feel competent in completing my course work(E2)	23.5	43.0	26.0	7.0	0.5
I am able to manage my time and priorities effectively to meet academic demands (E3)	22.0	42.5	26.5	8.0	1.0
Learning Quality					
I feel I have efficiently learned my course work materials.(F1)	6.0	33.0	32.5	16.0	12.5
I have performed well in my academia (F2)	22.5	52.5	20.0	4.5	0.5
I am satisfied with the quality of my academic resources.(F3)	17.0	47.5	27.5	7.0	1.0

# 3.4 Data analysis method

SEM was utilized with AMOS Version 21.0 to analyze the data, enabling the simultaneous assessment of construct scale measurement properties and their substantive relationships. AMOS is a widely recognized SEM software software known for analyzing regression equation systems and exploring complex variable relationships (Sürücü et al., 2023).To ensure methodological rigour, we followed the two-step approach (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988, 1992; Fornell & Yi, 1992). In the first step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the factor structure of the constructs under study: ASE, LM, SE, CA, and LQ to establish measurement model fit. We analyzed the full measurement model incorporating latent and observable components in one full measurement model. In the second step, the analysis focused on the complete structural model and tested the relationships among the five latent constructs to determine the extent to which the data fit the hypothesized structural model.

## 3.4.1 Testing normality constructs

In the context of assessing normality in the distributions, the values for skewness and kurtosis serve as critical indicators. According to (George, 2010), skewness and kurtosis values falling within the range of -2 to +2 are generally deemed acceptable. Furthermore, (Byrne, 2010; Hair et al., 2013) provides a slightly broader criterion, suggesting that data can be considered normally distributed if skewness values are between -2 and +2, and kurtosis values fall between -7 and +7.

Table 3 presents the results of the normality test, showing that most skewness and kurtosis values fall within the acceptable range. Skewness values are largely between -0.5 and 0.5, indicating that the data distribution is generally symmetric, with only a few variables showing moderate skewness. Similarly, the kurtosis values are mostly within the range of -1 to 1, reflecting a relatively normal distribution in terms of tail behavior, except for a slight excess kurtosis in one item (E1). Therefore, the data can reasonably be assumed to approximate a normal distribution, which supports the application of statistical techniques, such as SEM hence assuming normality in the data.

	Table 3: Skewness and kurtosis parameters														
ITEM	Y1	Y2	Y3	X1	X2	X3	Z1	Z2	Z3	E1	E2	E3	F1	F2	F3
~													• 10		
Skewne	.339	.172	.371	.925	.865	.589	.263	.318	.191	.963	.401	.510	.348	.598	.396
SS															
Kurtosi	09	62	79	26	-	17	04	24	93	1.15	31	07	67	.429	08
S	1	1	2	9	0.16	9	7	2	1		1	5	0		8

# 3.5 Results

This section details the model fit for both measurement and structural models. Furthermore, it displays the outcomes of hypothesis testing.

#### 3.5.1 Model fit -measurement models

This section evaluates the measurement models for the individual factors to ensure that the data support the theoretical relationships among the observed variables and their respective factors. Consequently, CFA was conducted on each measurement model to examine their model fit. The results are summarized in Table 4.

For reliability assessment as shown in table 4, Cronbach's alpha values were computed for all measurement models. The ASE construct achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.910, demonstrating strong internal consistency. The LM construct produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.892, also reflecting high reliability. The CA construct exhibited a Cronbach's alpha of 0.870. SE maintained a well-fitting model with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.850, while LQ, the critical outcome variable, demonstrated robust reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.940. The Cronbach's alpha scores in all cases were well above the 0.70 threshold, indicating strong reliability (Thorsen & Bjorner, 2010).

The results from Table 4 highlight the psychometric properties of the constructs: SE, LM, CA, ASE, and LQ. For SE, the factor loadings range from 0.23 to 0.66, with a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.789, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2013). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.561 exceeds the 0.50 threshold, suggesting that the construct explains more than half of the variance in its indicators (Fornell & Yi, 1992). Similarly, LM shows strong psychometric properties, with loadings from 0.46 to 0.71, a CR of 0.886, and an AVE of 0.724, confirming excellent reliability and convergent validity.

However, CA demonstrates slightly lower reliability, with a CR of 0.676 and an AVE of 0.493, suggesting the need for further refinement of the construct's measurement items (Bowden & Finch, 2017). ASE also exhibits moderate reliability, with loadings between 0.64 and 0.79 and a CR of 0.744, while its AVE of 0.493 falls marginally below the recommended threshold (Bagozzi & Foxall, 1996).In contrast, LQ shows the strongest psychometric properties, with loadings from 0.11 to 0.52, a CR of 0.895, and an AVE of 0.742, demonstrating good internal consistency and validity (Byrne, 2005). The VIF values for the predictors range from 1.146 to 4.427, all of which are below the widely accepted threshold of 5, indicating an acceptable amount of multicollinearity (Black & Babin, 2019).

Item	Loading	Mean	Std Dev	Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	CR	AVE	VIF
Y1	0.66	2.49	0.919	SE	0.85	0.789	0.561	1.267
Y2	0.36	2.55	0.976					1.206
Y3	0.23	3.06	1.11					1.177
X1	0.71	1.87	0.944	LM	0.892	0.886	0.724	1.731
X2	0.46	1.98	1.039					1.273
X3	0.60	2.16	0.916					1.462
Z1	0.54	2.46	0.844	CA	0.87	0.676	0.493	1.343
Z2	0.79	2.44	0.923					1.675
Z3	0.37	2.84	1.165					1.205
E1	0.64	2.14	0.933	ASE	0.91	0.744	0.493	3.648
E2	0.79	2.19	0.888					4.427
E3	0.66	2.25	0.939					1.146
F1	0.11	2.97	1.111	LQ	0.94	0.895	0.742	1.427

Table 4: Measurement model statistics, reliability, and convergent validity

F2	0.52	2.09	0.807	1.469
F3	0.51	2.25	0.845	1.221

**Note:** CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

## 3.5.2 Model fit – full structural model

A model is considered good fitting if the Chi-square Minimum Discrepancy divided by the Degrees of Freedom (CMIN/df) value is <5 (Dash & Paul, 2021). Others included the Goodnessof-Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), Root-Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardized Root-Mean-Square Residual (SRMR). In a good-fitting model, the CFI may exceed 0.90 (Byrne, 2005), though values near 0.95 are preferred (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Other indices like GFI, TLI, IFI, RFI, and NFI should also be more significant than 0.90 (Byrne, 2005), while caution is exercised with the GFI as it is sensitive to smaller sample sizes (Indexes, 1999). The SRMR should be less than 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), and RMSEA values below 0.05 reflect a closefitting model (Rigdon, 1996), while values between 0.05 and 0.08 indicate a reasonable fit (Ryu, 2008).

The five measurement models were integrated into the structural model to evaluate the hypothesized relationships among the latent factors. The fit indices for the model shown in Figure 2 fell within the acceptable range: Chi-square =176.007, CMIN/df = 2.095, GFI = 0.914, TLI = 0.883, CFI = 0.905, SRMR = 0.05 and RMSEA = 0.056. Thus, the results confirm the model's robustness and suggest that the data is consistent with the hypothesized relationships.

The structural model's performance, including all fit indices and standardized regression weights, is shown in Table 5. The p-value of 0.000 for  $\chi^2 = 176.007$  with 84 degrees of freedom may signal significance, although this result is expected due to the sensitivity of the chi-square statistic (Bentler & Bonett, 1980). Other indices, such as GFI =.914, CFI =.905, and IFI =.912, are more accurate measures of model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The TLI =.883 approaches the required threshold of 0.90, indicating that the model is adequate. Furthermore, the RMSEA of 0.056 is within the acceptable range of 0.05 to 0.08, indicating a decent match (Cudeck, 2000).

The standardized regression coefficients in Figure 2 show the essential links between the various elements. ASE significantly impacts LQ ( $\beta = 0.72$ , p = 0.004), indicating its importance in academic achievement. LM enhances LQ ( $\beta = 0.87$ , p = 0.002), highlighting the significance of

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motivation in building confidence. CA has a significant impact on SE ( $\beta = 0.60$ , p = 0.002). This suggests that well-adapted pupils have better educational outcomes.

The original theoretically derived model provided the best fit for the data, and the analysis supported the hypothesized structural relationships. Table 5 shows the fit indices for the model, which confirmed its robustness and applicability to understanding the factors influencing LQ among international students.

In addition, Table 6 demonstrates the results of structural model. The Table 6 clearly demonstrates that all the hypotheses are significant positively meet the threshold value. Therefore, all the hypotheses are accepted.



Figure 2: Full structural model results with standardized regression coefficients.

Table 5: Standardized Regression Weights for Full Structural Model and Model Fit Indices												
Patl	1	Standa	rdiz	ed regr	ession v	veight			p-value			
$ASE \rightarrow$	LQ			0.064					0.004			
$LM \rightarrow A$	ASE			0.846	46			0.001				
$CA \rightarrow$	LQ			0.186				0.001				
$CA \rightarrow$	SE			0.597				0.002				
$SE \rightarrow$	LQ			0.081					0.005			
$LM \rightarrow$	LQ			0.872					0.002			
$E1 \rightarrow A$	ASE			0.635					0.005			
$E2 \rightarrow A$	ASE			0.789					0.000			
$E3 \rightarrow A$	ASE			0.661					0.000			
$X1 \rightarrow $	LM			0.712					0.000			
$X2 \rightarrow $	LM			0.462					0.000			
$X3 \rightarrow $	LM			0.596					0.000			
$Z1 \rightarrow$	CA			0.537	0.537 0.005							
$Z2 \rightarrow$	CA		0.788					0.000				
$Z3 \rightarrow$	$Z3 \rightarrow CA$			0.373					0.000			
$Y1 \rightarrow$	$Y1 \rightarrow SE$			0.663					0.000			
$Y2 \rightarrow$	$Y2 \rightarrow SE$			0.356					0.007			
$Y3 \rightarrow$	SE			0.230					0.004			
$F1 \rightarrow 1$	LQ			0.114					0.005			
$F2 \rightarrow 1$	LQ			0.519					0.002			
$F3 \rightarrow$	LQ			0.	513				0.003			
Model Fit	χ²	CMIN/df	df	p- value	GFI	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR		
Structural Model Fit	176.006	2.095	84	0.005	0.914	0.905	0.912	0.883	0.056	0.05		

Model Fit
Note: $\chi^2$ = Chi-square statistic; CMIN/df = Minimum Discrepancy per Degree of Freedom; df = Degrees of Freedom; GFI =
Goodness-of-Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; IFI = Incremental Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root
Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual.

Table 6: Summary of Hypothesis test results								
Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardized coefficient	p-value	Significance				
H1	$SE \rightarrow LQ$	0.08	0.005	Significant				
H2	$CA \rightarrow SE$	0.60	0.002	Significant				
H3	$LM \rightarrow ASE$	0.85	0.001	Significant				

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H4	$ASE \rightarrow LQ$	0.72	0.004	Significant
Н5	$LM \rightarrow LQ$	0.87	0.002	Significant
Н6	$CA \rightarrow LQ$	0.19	0.001	Significant
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**Note:** SE = Study Experience; LQ = Learning Quality; CA = Cultural Adaptation; ASE = Academic Self-Efficacy; LM = Learning Motivation.

# **4** Discussions and implications

All six hypotheses outlined in this study were accepted. Firstly, SE has a positive effect on LQ. According to research, interactions with instructors, extracurricular activities, and support systems improve students' learning results (Marginson, 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2024). Others suggest that excellent academic and social experiences enable students to adjust more successfully, hence improving their engagement and achievement (Sá, 2023). However, SE indicates a weak statistical relationship showing that it is not a strong predictor of LQ as other factors.

The positive relationship between CA and SE emphasises the importance of cultural adjustment in improving student engagement and academic outcomes. Effective CA helps overseas students feel more comfortable and connected in their new surroundings, allowing for increased participation in both academic and social contexts (Bai et al., 2023; Cao et al., 2023). This integration removes cultural barriers, allowing students to participate more completely in classroom activities and extracurricular engagements, so improving their entire SE (Atobatele et al., 2024). This suggests that SE contributes indirectly to LQ rather than being a dominat factor. The strong positive association between LM and ASE emphasises the importance of motivation in developing students' confidence in their academic ability. High levels of motivation help students to engage more persistently with academic assignments, improving their ASE by reinforcing their belief in their skills to succeed (Chen et al., 2023). This finding agrees with earlier research demonstrating that motivated students tend to establish higher goals, use effective learning strategies, and demonstrate resilience, all of which contribute to stronger ASE (Shengyao et al., 2024).

The positive standard regression coefficient of 0.72 for the association between ASE and LQ emphasises ASE as a crucial element in improving LQ. This robust association implies that students' confidence in their academic abilities considerably boosts their learning experiences and outcomes. This conclusion supports prior studies emphasising the critical role of ASE in academic resilience and motivation (Meng & Zhang, 2023). High ASE allows students to tackle academic

assignments with more remarkable persistence and ingenuity, resulting in higher learning outcomes (Barton, 2023). Therefore, institutions looking to improve the LQ of international students should prioritise cultivating ASE.

The study not only found a positive relationship between LM and LQ but surpassed all other factors in directly enhancing LQ, indicating that motivated students participate more actively in their academic environment, resulting in more excellent educational outcomes. This is consistent with earlier studies indicating that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation improves student engagement, persistence, and performance (Wang & Jou, 2023). Therefore, emphasises the importance of support structures that promote personal and intellectual improvement. This suggests that motivational interventions have the potential for transformative impacts.

While CA contributes significantly to building a suitable learning environment for international students, it is not the most significant factor in improving LQ in this context. With a standard regression coefficient of 0.19, CA's impact on LQ is apparent but relatively low compared to ASE's. Previous studies emphasize the value of CA in helping learners integrate and minimize anxiety (Asri et al., 2024; Cao et al., 2023). However, this study strengthens the assumption that ASE, or students' confidence in their academic ability, substantially affects LQ (Khawwaf et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2023; Prasetyono et al., 2024). This reinforces the change in emphasis towards intrinsic elements over external cultural influences.

#### 4.1 Theoretical implications

This study provides notable theoretical contributions by challenging existing paradigms focusing on CA and SE as the key drivers of LQ among international students. Instead, it emphasises LM and ASE as more powerful predictors, implying a paradigm change in understanding how confidence in academic ability influences learning outcomes. This finding builds on (Bandura 1997) self-efficacy theory by applying it to international education, indicating that LM and ASE promote academic perseverance and improve adaptability in culturally varied educational environments. The findings suggest that a student's conviction in their own academic ability is critical in obtaining good LQ, perhaps outweighing environmental and cultural changes. Furthermore, this study enriches motivational theories by demonstrating that LM serves two functions: it directly improves LQ and indirectly supports it by strengthening ASE. This integrated viewpoint is consistent with motivational theories that emphasise the relationship between self-beliefs and goal-oriented behaviour (Hinduja et al., 2024), expanding our understanding of how

LM influences educational results across contexts. By verifying these correlations using a structural model, this study invites future research to take a more comprehensive approach to predicting LQ, including psychological and contextual factors.

These theoretical insights call for additional studies emphasizing ASE and LM as critical to educational success in globalized academic environments, leading scholars to reconsider existing paradigms. Future research, for example, might look at how ASE promotes academic resilience across different cultural contexts, adding to the body of knowledge on cross-cultural adaptation and educational success. Finally, this study provides a new foundation for understanding LQ, urging the development of theoretical models that prioritise psychological self-regulation mechanisms over purely contextual adjustments, laying the groundwork for more comprehensive models in international education research.

#### 4.2 Practical implications

On a practical level, institutions and educators should prioritise developing policies in both LM and ASE. This can be accomplished by teaching educators, particularly instructors and advisors, tactics for increasing student confidence, such as setting attainable goals, providing constructive comments, and recognizing gradual improvement. Universities can improve the SE by providing seminars, academic clubs, and collaborative learning initiatives that augment formal instruction, resulting in well-rounded, meaningful learning results. A university could adopt an academic mentorship program in which experienced students assist newcomers with academic assistance and CA, thereby providing a comprehensive approach to student growth. Educational leaders should prioritise student-centred policies that encourage ASE and incorporate CA and academic assistance. Policymakers may encourage universities to implement peer tutoring, mentoring, and counselling services that help students develop confidence in their academic ability. Recognizing that CA alone is insufficient, these support systems should combine cultural orientation and academic confidence-building activities to provide holistic assistance. Such measures would improve academic and personal outcomes for international students, strengthening institutional competitiveness worldwide and creating a welcoming educational environment for varied student populations.

# **5** Conclusions

The study aims to provide unique insights into the aspects influencing LQ among international students, utilizing an SEM to investigate both direct and indirect correlations. The findings

emphasise the significance of psychological and experiential components, particularly ASE and LM, in determining students' educational success. LM was revealed as a significant predictor of LQ, emphasizing the importance of instilling students with confidence in their academic ability. LM directly and indirectly affects LQ, highlighting the importance of motivational tactics in academic settings.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that CA is essential in improving students' SE, although its impact on LQ is less significant. These findings question previous ideas that CA is the most critical predictor of LQ among overseas students in China. Instead, the data emphasise that increasing students' LM has a more significant impact on enhancing their academic outcomes. The structural model described in this research incorporates academic, psychological, and experiential dimensions and provides a complete framework for understanding the elements that influence LQ. The approach offers actionable insights for educators and policymakers, highlighting the importance of creating supportive educational settings that increase student motivation, selfefficacy, and academic engagement

# 6 Limitations, suggestions and Future Prospects

This study provides valuable insights into the elements influencing LQ among international students; nonetheless, limitations must be noted. The sample was restricted to a university, limiting the findings' applicability to other institutions and areas. While the findings provide a deep insight into SE in this specific environment, future research should broaden the sample to include different universities around China to validate and improve the findings' relevance. Furthermore, using a cross-sectional survey methodology limits the capacity to establish causal links between variables, such as the impact of LM and CA over time. Longitudinal research would help us understand how these conceptions evolve throughout students' academic careers. The dependence on self-reported data also raises the possibility of social desirability bias, in which participants exaggerate or underestimate their experiences, performance, or motivation. Investigating potential moderating or mediating variables, such as the role of institutional support in increasing CA, may provide more nuanced insights into improving LQ. Addressing these limitations through larger sample sizes, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches will strengthen future findings and contribute to more effective policy interventions to improve international students' academic experiences.

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